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Dear friends,

Welcome to another issue of the Newsletter! I am very grateful to be taking the reins from Kelsey for my first issue as editor.

I owe a great gratitude to several people who have made the process smooth, not least of them to Kelsey herself. I am sure it will not surprise anyone that Kelsey kept systematic notes so that her successor could fit smoothly into their role without needing to learn from scratch. I am sure that to anyone who knows Kelsey’s notes, it will come as no surprise that she is now enjoying herself as a successful postdoctoral researcher in Munich. Let’s hope she comes back often to visit!

A similar succession has taken place in another arm of China Studies’ media, Flavia Fang has been working on our ‘fast-press’, overseeing, with Nick Stember and Li Yizhuo, all that goes on within the faculty, and making sure that it is accessible to anyone who follow our social media. This work goes on in the dark, and so it rarely gets noticed, but I am sure we would all notice if it was not there, so thank you very much to Flavia, and thank you also to Nick and Yizhuo, who continue to work very hard for us!

Whilst I hope I will make a competent editor, I am clueless when it comes to design, and design programmes, so I cannot take any credit for the sleek look of this edition, this was all the work of my wife Aayushi Gupta, who is a bit of a whizz with all things design-oriented. I hope that you all enjoy the new look!

Involving myself with the Newsletter has been a joy so far, I considered our community to be small in number, but goodness what a lot of song and poetry we have cumulatively produced over the last few months! And what a lot of writers we have that can conjure up the readable as well as the academic. It has been delightful to be a recipient of our faculty’s creative outputs over these last few months, and I hope that it proves just as enjoyable to read.

During the writing of this this issue, we received the very sad news that Professor Joe McDermott has died. Professor McDermott has been a very important and greatly loved member of the faculty for twenty-five years, and he will be remembered with great affection. We will have a special section in the next issue dedicated to his life and his impact on our department.

John Donegan-Cross
The 2nd of November marked a very special anniversary for our faculty, and for the university at large. Michael Loewe has celebrated his 100th birthday in Cambridge, where he has been a part of the Chinese Studies community for fifty-nine years. It would be difficult to overstate Professor Loewe's contributions to the field of Early China studies, and indeed to the culture of the department at Cambridge. As Professor Roel Sterckx has observed, ‘No student of Han China since the 1960s has been able to conduct research without Michael's findings in the background. He has been an inspiring teacher, and few scholars have been so hospitable, so unselfish and so generous with their time to students and colleagues’.

Professor Loewe was born on Beaumont street in Oxford, just across from the Ashmolean Museum. Perhaps infused by the atmosphere of that famous road and museum, or perhaps inspired by his academic family, he proved himself an adept classicist at school in Cambridge. After his schooling he attained a scholarship to Magdalen College in Oxford, where he read Greats. In his first year, following the outbreak of war with Japan, Professor Loewe was selected to learn Japanese on an experimental intensive language course designed to provide important linguistic intelligence for war work. He studied at the secret Bedford Japanese School run by Captain Oswald Tuck RN on the first course, which began in February 1942 and lasted for five months. Towards the end of the course some training in cryptography was given. After completing the course Loewe was posted to Bletchley Park, where he worked in the Naval Section until the end of the war. It was here also that he met his wife, Carmen Blacker, who has also been of profound impact on our department as a Japanologist.
Following the end of the war, Professor Loewe opted to continue government service rather than return to Oxford, and taught himself Chinese during a six-month posting in Beijing. It was here that his interest in traditional Chinese history flourished, which was to set the course for his academic life. In 1951 he achieved a first-class degree in Classical Chinese from SOAS, and then, leaving the civil service, he became a lecturer. In those years before his retirement in 1990, he was an inspirational teacher and a prolific publisher. Professor Denis Twitchett wrote that during this time a new generation of historians of ancient China emerged, both in China and the West, 'many of them [Michael's] students, and all of them under his influence. They have created ... the liveliest, most diversified, and most innovative field of Chinese historical scholarship'.

Professor Loewe moved to Cambridge in 1963 – the same year that he received a doctorate from SOAS – and has been instrumental in forging and shaping the unique culture of Chinese studies here. He is renowned for having always had time for everyone, students and colleagues alike. His depth and breadth of knowledge are unparalleled, now accumulated over a century, and so it is all the more surprising that he is able to wear it so lightly. He is responsible for the nurture and shaping of generations of sinologists, and has laid academic foundations to which future scholars will be referring back for many generations to come.

In our department Professor Loewe is also remembered annually by the ‘Michael Loewe Prize’ a unique award given to one or more undergraduates who have achieved distinction in Classical Chinese. Through this award, he will continue to inspire the teaching of Classical Chinese at Cambridge indefinitely. Over the past couple of decades, as part of a wider project to interview some of the great experts of Chinese studies across the world, Professor Loewe has been interviewed on his intellectual journey by Professor
Sterckx and Dr Jenny Jingyi Zhao. The first interview took place in 2014, and brought Professor Loewe and Professor Edward Shaughnessy together to discuss the editorial process of their classic work *The Cambridge History of China*. In 2019 he was interviewed again to discuss more details of his intellectual journey. These interviews can be viewed online at [https://www.cambridge.org/core/membership/ssec/conversations](https://www.cambridge.org/core/membership/ssec/conversations).

The department has been blessed by several decades of Professor Loewe’s teaching, writing, and inspiration. It joins together with our whole field in wishing Professor Loewe our congratulations on becoming a centenarian.
Hello Dr Fan, thank you very much for agreeing to tell us about yourself today. On the 6th of October we were treated to your talk, ‘Eating Sheep Shit’: Gender, Politics and Chen Hengzhe’s Visit to Warlord Sichuan’, but now this is an opportunity to learn a little more about your background and ideas. So please give us an introduction to your background:

I do consider myself to be a historian of modern China, but I am also driven by an interest in world history and global history. Indeed, my formational years as an undergraduate student were as a student of world history in China. The final two years were in the institute of the History of Ancient Civilisations at Changchun 长春. At that time I wanted to become a classicist. It was a world famous institution at that time during the late 1990s, and was rather a unique education. In the last two years in that programme all my professors were so called ‘foreign experts’, and we had classes in English. Of course, at that time I was struggling with the language!

Interesting! So recently you published a book, World History and National Identity in China: The Twentieth Century, would you say this book is inflected with your early education?

Yes it is certainly related to the intellectual journey of these years. The book discusses the tension, the complicated relationship between feelings of national belonging and global outlook amongst educated elites of the twentieth century; the paradoxes inherent in drawing together a global outlook and nationalisms.
I was also fortunate to be able to co-edit [with Professor Almut-Barbara Renger at Free University Berlin] the volume *Reception of Greek and Roman Antiquity in East Asia*. I personally had this degree in Western Classics in China, studied from a unique Chinese perspective as part of a global history institute. I engaged in this collaborative project with Professor Renger about the reception of Roman Antiquity in East Asia in order to introduce a broader conversation about East Asian perspectives of the Western Tradition. We did not want to plumb the depths of the story as such, but wanted to present a broad picture of how those in China, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan were all making sense of the foundations of Western thought.

*Would you call it historiography?*

Not necessarily, I would rather call it a survey of the field because Classics is much more than History. For instance, we had chapter contributors discussing laws in South Korea and we also had those discussing architecture in modern Taiwan. I would say it was a fundamentally interdisciplinary collaboration. In terms of scholarly contribution I would say that what we achieved was the establishment of a conversation, we did not necessarily answer the questions that we raised. What I do believe is that in the future any scholars hoping to open up a similar project will be able to look to our book for inspiration, and as a useful reference.

*Will you be continuing to teach these themes here?*

I am coming from a slightly different system, and previously I was part of the History department which was much larger, with less of a close-knit community feel. Here I assume that I will be teaching a wide range of subjects relating to Chinese history. In a sense, this suits the themes that I have explored previously very well. There will be plenty of opportunity to engage with themes of historiography, and indeed global History always lurks behind specific history. For instance, this term I am teaching China’s part in the Global History of the Second World War. Of course this is Chinese History, but it cannot be separated from its global context.

*And how are you settling into Cambridge?*

It is a very positive experience in general!

*Is it cold?*

Not too bad! I grew up in Changchun, which is Manchuria. It is just about the coldest place in the world! Minus 30! So for us it is not too cold, for us the problem we have a little is the lack of sunlight, but again it is not too bad for me, I lived in Berlin for two years.

*And your wife [Dr Yan He. Head of Chinese Section at the University Library] has also recently moved to the University Library? How has that been moving together?*

That is wonderful! Great luck for us! It is very difficult for two academics to find good jobs in the
same location. In the past I used to commute weekly for fourteen hours for five to six years.

Gosh! And now it is a two minute cycle between FAMES and the UL!

Exactly!

So the last thing is, of the Cambridge things like punting, evensong, formals, music concerts, have you been getting to all of these things

Oh yes absolutely! It has been overwhelming, I have been going to all of these things! It has been a very positive experience at Cavendish! I look forward to many more such experiences.

Thank you very much for your time and for this insight into your thoughts and experiences!

My pleasure!
Beautiful Beijing! No visitor to Beijing in the middle of 1980s, when I first made it to Beijing, could have thought that this could become a beautiful city full of lovely parks. Then everything was dusty, brown, and broken. The few trees that there were looked like the ones in Britain after this year’s hot and dry summer. Now they are thriving. It is mid-October. The wide difference between day and night temperatures means that the leaves of the trees are a rainbow of colours, dazzling in the bright autumn sunshine. The grass of the campus is green, the roads are properly tarmacked, and the sidewalks are even. Car horns have been silenced. The sandstorms, so my students tell me, are not so bad anymore because the northwest has been greened. We will see.

I am here now because for the next five years I will be teaching at Peking University during the autumn semester. In the same way that back in the 1980s I could not possible have anticipated that the Peking University campus would be transformed into one of the most beautiful in the world, then I also could not have foreseen that one day I might join its History Department where such great historians as 钱穆 Qian Mu, 陈寅恪 Chen Yinke (or Yinque if you prefer), 顾颉刚 Gu Jiegang, and 蒋伯赞 Jian Bozan once taught and researched. It is a huge privilege.

My duties include teaching two courses. One, the history of modern Britain, is for undergraduates from all departments. The reason I have been tasked to deliver this course is because the History Department’s British history professor, 高岱 Gao Dai, recently retired and will not be replaced. I spent a good deal of the spring
and summer preparing for this class, in which I cover the UK’s history from the 1801 union of Britain and Ireland to Brexit. The other class is ‘Asia in the Second World War,’ in which I focus on China, India, and Indonesia, as I am doing in my current research. One surprise has been that two students in this one are learning Dutch, my mother tongue. The reason is that there is an Indonesian historian, 徐冠冕 Xu Guanmian, who is a Leiden University PhD. His postgraduate students need to learn Dutch to be able to use the voluminous Dutch archives for Indonesian history.

This is the age of Covid. It took me three weeks to make it to Beijing, spending first ten days in Hong Kong to quarantine there and then another ten days here, the last three of which fortunately at home. It took a while to sort out the apps I need to be able to move around and to get the facial scanners at Peking University’s gates to recognize me. 我们, foreigners, look too much alike, it seems. The security guard taking my portrait photograph told me that it usually takes between five and ten tries before he can get
the system to work. We have to take a Covid test once every three days. That, though, takes just a few minutes. The 大白, the Big White, who does the swap does so only ever so lightly; he seems to try to reduce the chances of a positive result to a minimum. The opposite was true in my quarantine hotel, where the swap went into my nose until it hit my throat.

All that is behind me now. Life is surprisingly normal. The campus is full of students, where the rage now is to play with and take care of thousands of cats. One university official told me that they are fully vaccinated, unlike many Beijingers. Restaurants, shops, and markets are open; the streets are busy; and people are going out. Beijingers being exceedingly hospitable, in the last ten days I have been to three banquets and there are a couple more to come. I have been able to meet up with many colleagues around Beijing and to catch up with the latest gossip.

One question that University officials keep returning to in our conversations is what it takes to build a world famous university that can last eight hundred years. They want their legacy to be, so it seems, to have laid the basis for that.

In practical terms the result is not just a beautiful campus, but also unparalleled research resources. There cannot be many databases that are not available here. I have checked those out for British history. My Cambridge colleagues in British history are rather less well served than the one pretend one at Peking University. Unsurprisingly, the same is true for Chinese history.

I do not think that China will lift its Covid restrictions any time soon. It therefore makes no sense to come for a short trip. Now that quarantine is just a week, though, longer stays for research are sensible again. Come and join me.
DUNHUANG UPDATES

This term saw the Dunhuang and Silk Road Seminar series continue both in person and online, with guests presenting from East Asia and from all over Europe.

The first talk of the term was given by Professor Kirill Solonin of Renmin University of China, who presented the essential elements of Tangut Buddhism. Professor Solonin spoke into the current scholarly consensus that a rigorous study of Tangut Buddhism was impossible only from the confines of Tangut studies. He presented to us several textual clusters of Sinitic and Tibetan within the category of Tangut Buddhism, and thereby argued that Tangut Buddhism ought to be studied by collaboration between various fields. Through his discussion, he also highlighted the centrality and importance of Tangut Buddhism to wider Buddhist studies, and showed what these newer avenues of studies might contribute to more established fields of Buddhist studies.

Following this exciting opening, Professor Hannes Fellner of the University of Vienna drew us several centuries back in time, with a description and analysis of Brahmi culture on the Eastern Silk Road. He noted the primacy of trade routes through the Tarim basin as centres of writing, copying, translating, and transmitting texts, and plotted the evolution between Brahmi writing across Sanskrit, Tocharian, and Saka.

Lurching forward a millennia, we entered into November with a talk given by Tjalling Halbertsma of the University of Groningen in which he presented gravestones and stele of the Church of the East documented in Inner
Mongolia. He introduced these objects for us, and contextualised them next to the travels and achievements of the monk-turned-diplomat Rabban Sauma’s, and more widely next to the Church of the East in Inner Mongolia and its medieval remains.

Our next speaker was Dr. Friederike Assandri of the University of Leipzig, who treated us to a reconstructed History of Daoism in Chang’an following the reunification of the Tang Empire. Dr. Assandri took us through two texts from different areas of society (Cheng Xuanying’s Expository commentary to the *Daode jing*, and the *Benji jing*), and used thorough close reading to draw a picture of how Buddhist concepts were drawn into contemporary Daoist ideas, and indeed how competing traditions within Daoism became integrated.

Finally, travelling South, our very own Dr. Hajni Elias treated us to a rare and stimulating discussion of depictions of a sexual and intimate nature in Eastern Han tombs in Sichuan. She explored the significance of these images, only found in Sichuan, and showed us how their significance in the funerary art of the region is still considered enigmatic. More generally, she shared with us a general overview of such images within the funerary context of early China, and placed them within wider depictions of the ideal afterlife.

We now enter into a well earned holiday, having moved across thousands of years and miles, with another term of Art, Religion, Language, History, and Archaeology!

If you would like to be part of the Dunhuang and Silk Road Seminar mailing list, then please contact Junfu Wong at jw2034@cam.ac.uk.
CHINA RESEARCH SEMINAR

On the 6th of October, our very own Dr. Xin Fan introduced himself in style to a room packed to the gills with eager listeners. Perhaps it was the controversial title of the talk “Eating Sheep Shit: Gender, Politics and Chen Hengzhe’s Visit to Warlord Sichuan”, or perhaps it was Dr Fan’s status as the newest member of the faculty that drew an audience so great that future talks needed to be moved to a larger venue. Dr Fan introduced the writer, historian, and public intellectual Chen Hengzhe 陳衡哲 (1890–1976), who published a series of essays between 1934 and 1935 documenting her family’s journey to Sichuan, at that time dominated by warlord politics and known for its isolation from outside. Chen’s writings were very critical of widespread opium addiction and suffered vicious backlash from locals, and indeed were deemed scandalous at a national level. Dr Fan used this discussion as a platform to discuss important issues of male dominated media, and overlooked women throughout history. In attempting to rehabilitate Chen, Dr Fan was trying to encourage similar efforts towards other overlooked women in history.

The following week, Dr Brian Lander, visiting us from Brown University, and fresh off the back of having recently published The King’s Harvest: A Political Ecology of China from the First Farmers to the First Empire, treated us to a tour de force in environmental history. Dr. Lander plotted the gradual transformation of the Yangzi river valley from swamp to rice paddy, and described how the animals that once would have called these wetlands home were gradually displaced by agriculture. Through this case study, Dr Lander made a broader point showing the centrality and importance of water control infrastructure not only to agriculture, but also to ecosystems, demographics, and politics.

On the 20th of October, Dr Josh Stenberg of the University of Sydney discussed the presentation of Indonesia in Chinese language writing during the early phases of the Cold War. He described for us the relationship between these two neighbours, and portrayed the composition of a narrative of anti-imperialistic solidarity between them. Dr Stenberg argued that reportage and touristic writing during this period was markedly distinct from the exoticising and emergently leftist tendencies of 1930s writing, and indeed that it was distinct from reporting during the war. He argued that this writing, combined with translations of popular song and literature into Chinese contributed to the impression of an allied archipelago that was allied with the PRC in a perilous national environment.

On the 3rd of November Dr Dror Weil traversed Sidgwick site to join us from the History Faculty, and to encourage us to ‘Go West’, and study overlooked and understudied knowledge exchanges across Asia between the mid-16th and early-18th centuries.
Dr Weil's specific subject matter were a network of Chinese savants who immersed themselves deeply in the study of Arabic and Persian texts, seeking new knowledge of the natural world. He wrote that through these savants, long-forgotten Arabic and Persian manuscripts were found in libraries, were purchased, were studied, and were published. In this process, the accumulated knowledge of Greek, Arab, and Persian traditions were woven together with contemporary Chinese theories and experiences, and a great sharing of knowledge was made possible.

We reconvened on the 16th of November to welcome Dr. Amanda Zhang, visiting us from all the way North in St Andrews. Dr Zhang's subject was the history of civilian women operatives who were attached to the peripheries of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) intelligence and security operations from the 1930s to the 1950s. She argued that, despite their not being recruited for physical combat, these women were considered to be excellent clandestine operative material. In this role many had great adventures spying, moving through front lines, sabotaging, and other exciting ventures during the Sino-Japanese War (1937 – 1945) and the Chinese Civil War (1945 – 1949).

Finally, to round off the series on the 24th of November, Professor Sin Kiong Wong of the National University of Singapore discussed the worst epidemic of twentieth-century China, the Manchurian plague from the winter of 1910 to the spring of 1911. Professor Wong's talk focussed on the important role that Penang-born Wu Lien-Teh 伍連德 (1879–1960) played during the epidemic and in the subsequent International Plague Conference, the first international medical conference hosted by China. Professor Wong's focus was how Wu was able to balance the responsibility of plague-fighting while also outmanoeuvring Japan and Russia's attempts to further their political and territorial goals using 'conference diplomacy'.
With the easing of restrictions and a return of the institute to more or less full capacity, we were delighted to resume a range of activities at the NRI this past term.

On 16th September, the NRI hosted a workshop titled “Reflections on the life and career of Dorothy Moyle Needham, FRS”, followed by a public event and an exhibition on the theme the following day. Dorothy Needham was a pioneering biochemist in the Sir William Dunn Institute of Biochemistry, who was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1948 for her research on the biochemistry of muscle contraction. She is frequently referred to as the wife of Joseph Needham; this hybrid workshop, however, aimed to recognise her in her own right as a distinguished scientist and someone who engaged closely with China and Chinese culture through her work at the Sino-British Science Co-operation Office. The workshop was chaired by Mary Brazelton (HPS, Cambridge), and John Moffett (Librarian, NRI) offered the opening remarks. The speakers Patricia Fara (Clare, Cambridge), Evan Ward (History, Brigham Young University), Robin Hesketh (Biochemistry, Cambridge), Gordon Barrett (History, Oxford), Gregory Blue (Global Studies, Victoria) and Rosalind Grooms (Archivist, NRI) each offered his/ her own reflections on a particular aspect of Dorothy Needham’s life and work. The NRI gratefully acknowledges support from Cambridge University Press and Assessment, The Wellcome Trust, and the Joseph Needham Foundation for Science and Civilisation (Hong Kong) for this event.

For the first time since the start of the pandemic, the NRI saw a full seminar programme with eight in person sessions. The seminars, delivered by visiting fellows or
speakers at the NRI and students and scholars based in Cambridge, covered a wide range of topics and time periods. These were well attended by an interdisciplinary audience, in particular those from the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (FAMES) and the History and Philosophy of Science (HPS). Arthur Harris (NRI) opened the programme with a comparative seminar on health and well-being in the Greco-Roman world and early China. Brian Lander (Brown University) led the audience through a text-reading of the Qi min yaoshu that featured advice on raising chickens. Dingyi Xu (Nanjing Agricultural University) traced the history of wheat in the Han Dynasty. Stephen Whiteman (Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London) offered reflections on mapping in China. ‘Some challenges in teaching early modern Chinese history’ was the topic of Vittoria Feola’s (Università di Padova) seminar. Nick Stember (FAMES) discussed ghostly apparitions and supernatural photography in the lianhuanhua The Shade (1981). Noga Ganany (FAMES) examined the pictorial hagiographies of the Daoist patriarch Xu Xun in the Ming Dynasty. The last seminar was given by Victor Seow (Harvard University), who introduced the audience to his new book on mining technologies and energy regimes in industrial East Asia.

This term also saw the welcome return of the Needham Memorial Lecture, sponsored by the Jing Brand Co. Ltd, which had been postponed due to the pandemic. On 4th November, Prof. Francesca Bray, Emerita Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh, delivered the fifth Needham Memorial Lecture at the Riley Auditorium in Clare Hall Memorial Court, chaired by Prof. Roel Sterckx. The lecture, titled ‘The Craft of Mud-making: Matter, Time and History Viewed through China’s Cropscapes’, offered reflections on mud as a useful medium for historians of technology and science to think about the plural temporalities of material practices. A video recording of the lecture is available on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O01cvu7eJ3E&t=216s.

If you would like to use the library at the NRI, please contact John Moffett (John.Moffett@nri.cam.ac.uk) to make an appointment.

If you would like to present your research at the NRI seminars, please contact Jenny Zhao (jz292@cam.ac.uk).
FRANCESCA BRAY, NEEDHAM TALK

This term has seen the fifth Needham Memorial Lecture taking place on 4th of November at Clare college. As a joint initiative between Gonville and Caius College, the trustees of NRI and several other institutes, this lecture was established in honor to Dr. Joseph Needham and his monumental contributions to the study of science and technology in China. And on this year’s memorable occasion, we are honored to welcome Francesca Bray, the Emerita Professor of Social Anthropology of the University of Edinburgh and a close associate of Dr. Needham, in delivering a fascinating talk on the technological history of mud making in China.

This year’s lecture was held in-person at the splendid venue of the Riley Auditorium and with a large live audience, some of whom had travelled far for this wonderful annual event. Prof. Bray’s talk for the day, titled “The Craft of mud-making: matter, time, and history viewed through China’s cropscape”, focuses on the example of mud-craft and its temporalities related to the material and social aspects of technology. In this one-hour long lecture, the audience were taken on a journey through different landscapes of farming, viewed both through ancient Chinese agronomic texts and volumes such as *Qimin Yaoshu*齐民要术, which later became sources of inspirations for her work on the agricultural history.

In the later part of the talk, Prof. Bray chose to focus on the example of mud, a resource crucial to farming, building, pottery making, painting and calligraphy, to demonstrate how different technical processes and natural environments shape each other. She explained the interconnectivity between mud making and crop cultivation, through an ever-mutating system known as the “cropscape”, a term used by Prof. Bray and her colleagues to refer to the assemblage of forces and materials revolving around a principal crop plants such as wheat, rice, sugar, soy, cotton, while contesting with contingencies of weather, pests and available labor resources. Three specific types of such...
“cropscapes” were also discussed. The first is the "millet cropscape" of northern China, where millet was the dominant staple in a system of dry-land farming for most of history. People of the northern regions from the Neolithic period until modern China seed, plow, cultivate, and harvest in a certain manner that is influenced by the semi-arid nature of local soil. Techniques such as crop rotation, seeding, hoeing, weeding are also developed to cultivate and maintain the right kind of mud, enabling people to flourish in an ecosystem where rain is relatively scarce.

The second is referred to as the “rice cropscape” in Kelantant, where Prof. Bray partook in a year of fieldwork in 1976. Though she found herself caught right in the middle of Green Revolution, Prof. Bray still managed to catch a glimpse of traditional farming methods that are adapted to the rain-abundant and monsoon-ridden seasons of Malaysia. Monsoon-dependent rice crops are grown, and the timings of harvest are executed precisely according to the rhythms of the seasons.

Another example mentioned by Prof. Bray in the lecture is the rice cropscape of southern China during the late imperial era. After the Song dynasty had been driven south, rice supplanted millet as the principal crop and therefore the social life of the southern lands became intertwined with the soil on the paddy fields. Prof. Bray also observed that the rhythms of women’s weaving and cycles of silkworms shaped men's work schedules, inspiring an additional feminist perspective of the study.

Finally, Prof. Bray concluded with an extra examination of the revived millet-scape in Wangjinzhuang, Hebei province in the 20th century and showed how new machinery and traditional farming methods were coupled to recreate fertile soil. These examples demonstrated that instead of being timeless and flat, mud making is a vibrant matter of historical significance and warrants serious scholarly attention. The process of making mud and maintaining soil led to reflections on how the propensities of land demand people of the land to act in a certain way and certain mindset in order to gain material abundance and achieve affordance. This potentially links the history of technology to social, political and gender history, as well as the material groundings of symbolic systems and the agency of material practices.

At the end of the event, questions were asked from the audience regarding the two-way relationship between mud and people, mud made for ceramics, and mud in relation to neo-Confucian world ordering notion, etc., which concluded the lecture in a rather lively discussion.
WHO'S NEW AT THE NEEDHAM

Flavia Fang is a cultural historian of medieval China and a specialist in sensory history. She completed her PhD at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge, with a dissertation on the cultural history of smells in medieval China. Prior to commencing her doctoral research, she studied Comparative Literature at the University of Rome, La Sapienza, where she also published her first book comparing dream metaphors in European and Chinese traditions, La Luna nell’acqua: metafore oniriche tra la letteratura cinese ed europea (Milan: AlboVersorio, 2020). At the NRI, she is developing a new research project on the views around the corpse in medieval China, an interdisciplinary project that bridges cultural history, religion, and the history of medicine.

Johan Rols has a PhD in Chinese religions and systems of thoughts from PSL-EPHE (Paris). He is a postdoctoral fellow funded by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation of Taiwan affiliated with the NRI and the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. In Paris, he is an associate doctor at the GSRL-CNRS research institute and the CRCAO-CNRS research institute. His academic work focuses on the environmental history of ancient and medieval China, the history of prohibitions, and the history of Taoism, beliefs and thought systems in medieval China. He also has an interest in the ethnography of contemporary Taoism and the influence of Taoism in 21st century Chinese web-literature.
WHO'S NEW AT THE NEEDHAM

Erling Agøy has a background in Chinese environmental history from the University of Oslo. Having a strong interest in the intellectual history of climate in China, he will spend his time at the Needham Institute looking into the history of traditional weather prognostications in 19th/20th century China.

Li Haijing is Associate Professor in Zhejiang University of Water Resources and Electric Power, Hangzhou, China. Her research focuses on the history of hydraulic engineering in China and interactions between China and Western countries in the field of hydraulic science and technology. In recent years, she has completed an oral interview project with more than 20 experts who have been involved in the Qiantang River management project. She has presided over and participated in more than 10 provincial and ministerial level projects, published more than 30 academic papers and 2 monographs.
WHO'S NEW AT THE NEEDHAM

Huang Huang obtained a Ph.D. in History of Science and Technology from the University of Science and Technology of China in 2014, and now is a lecturer and MA supervisor in Archaeology at Anhui University, China. Her main research areas include the history of Chinese metallurgy, traditional crafts and cultural heritage conservation. She plans to work on “gold and silver” craft on the surface of bronze vessels from the Warring States to the Han Dynasty during her visit to the NRI.

Brian Lander is an environmental historian of China and assistant professor at Brown University. He is currently working on the history of the Yangzi River’s wetlands. He’ll only be here till the end of term.
Over this last term, I have had the privilege and the honour to direct the final St John’s Music Society Chapel Late: ‘An Evening of Chinese Song and Poetry’. Performed by artists from across the university, we presented a selection of old poetic classics and new compositions from a range of ethnic groups in China, highlighting the beauty of Chinese music, very often under-programmed in Cambridge – for me, this meant xiushen 修身: the Confucian idea of self cultivation. I encouraged my musical performers Angel Wong (guzheng 古箏), Chris Cai (pipa 琵琶), and Coby O’Brien (piano) to consider themselves educated Tang Dynasty Literati, cooped up in their...
chamber playing qin 琴 and thinking about things really hard. My musicians came back with a fantastic program – a pipa medley from Cai, a fantastically spirited Mongolian piece from Wong, and a newly composed piano-vocal piece from O’Brien, who set Zhang Ji’s poetic classic ‘Night-mooring at Maple Bridge’ with smushy chords that reverberated throughout the chapel. Yasi Zhu also presented us with a gorgeous smattering of Chinese literary and musical history which framed the evening.

The concert was incredibly well attended – one of the best of the term, which is very promising! It was lovely to see the interest that Chinese art gets in the university and I hope we created a comforting atmosphere for those international students who are missing home.

Having developed an interest and love of Chinese music through my theatrical background and interest in jingju, I was ecstatic to have been chosen to direct this concert. I am a music student, so my interest in Chinese storytelling, cosmology, and drama sticks out like a sore thumb in the faculty, seeing as I am maybe the worst practical musician of all time (my piano ability is laughably bad...). However, as in most Cambridge faculties overly-focused on the study of Western art, big improving steps are being made, especially in terms of Global History and Ethnomusicological studies. Hopefully, I have prompted some people less familiar with the varying musical disciplines in China to have a look into the fantastic practices this country has.

A big thank you to the AMES faculty at Johns, who came out in a force to support the concert in their home turf and with whom I had some really brilliant conversations – I am just a music student, tentatively putting their toes into the world of sinology and it was amazing to learn and hear so much from experts in the field.

Hopefully this can become a termly thing, as was discussed with a couple of people post-concert – near the end of a stressful academic period, it is lovely to relax and unwind with some poetry, philosophy, and a good smattering of delicious tunes.
FROM TAIPEI TO CAMBRIDGE: A CONCERT INSPIRED BY OUR YEAR ABROAD

In November 2022, my classmate Immie Parsley and I put on a concert of songs inspired by our Year Abroad in Taiwan. Amongst our other countless adventures there, Immie and I performed together on several occasions in Taipei jazz bars, such as Big Apple in Songshan District, where we became a crowd favourite with the locals.

We couldn’t resist doing an encore in Cambridge, and the Pembroke College Music Society generously gave us a slot in their Michaelmas concert series. The Pembroke Old Library was filled to capacity, with over ninety guests coming to support us, including many Chinese Studies classmates, teachers and academics, and Taiwanese people living around Cambridge.

We began with 'Distance' by Emily King, a song about how being in physically faraway places brings us closer to who we are, which we thought was a poignant reflection of the challenges and joys of our Year Abroad. We followed this with Taiwanese heart-throb Crowd Lu’s 'The Name Engraved in My Heart' (刻在我心底的名字), from the...
hit 2020 film of the same name, which portrays the trials and tribulations of a gay couple during Taiwan’s martial law period. The song also reminded us of our ‘karaoke lessons’ (KTV課) while we were studying at the National Taiwan Normal University, whereby our teacher would make us sing along to cheesy Taiwanese pop songs. We then performed 'If I Could' (如果可以) by WeiBird 韋禮安, from the film Till We Meet Again (月老). This was truly the song of the year, and we heard it played everywhere from 7/11 convenience stores to temples.

We then took it down a notch by playing Ella Fitzgerald’s sweet classic Dream a Little Dream of Me, one of our favourite numbers to perform to the Taiwanese crowds last year. We followed this with our rendition of 'Write a Song' (寫一首歌) by Shunza 順子. This song means a lot to me, as I performed it at a swing bar with a Taiwanese friend on Christmas Day.

Throughout the year in Taiwan, the class would frequently deploy Immie, in a variety of settings, to do her superb Kate Bush impression, so our concert would not have veeb complete without her wonderful rendition of 'Wuthering Height's, which brought back memories of much joy and laughter for our classmates in the audience. We then performed Lala Hsu’s 徐佳瑩 ballad 'Speaking Without Sincerity' (言不由衷) as a homage to our dedicated and sorely missed Chinese teacher in our First and Second Years, Shenhsing Hong (Hong Laoshi). Having had zero knowledge of Chinese before coming to Cambridge, Immie and I in particular remain endlessly grateful for her teaching and patience. Hong Laoshi (with whom we reunited in Taipei over lunch!) tearfully played this song to us in our last lesson with her in Second Year, so this performance was a tribute to her. We then performed another of our Taipei open mic crowd-pleasers, an outrageous remix of 'Cry Me A River'

and 'American Boy'.

We ended with Wakin Chau’s 周華健 timeless classic 'Friends' (朋友). The song is particularly poignant for me, as the Big Apple swing bar, who became my ‘Taiwanese family’, surprised me by singing this song for me on one of my final evenings in Taipei, so as to wish me well for my journey home and the future. In Taiwan, this song is often sung on the last days of school, be it primary school, secondary school, or university graduations, as a way for students to wish each other well as they move onto pastures new. Conscious that this is the final year of our degree, we chose this song as an expression of gratitude for all our times and friendships here in Cambridge.

We were thrilled to receive an immediate and unanimous standing ovation, and had great fun meeting our Taiwanese audience members and taking photos with some of the teachers who had come to support us (a special mention to Zhao Laoshi and Wu Laoshi, who also came along but didn’t feature in any photos).

Above all, this concert was our opportunity to look back to the beautiful times we shared in Taiwan, and forwards to all those yet to come.
As put by the lyrics of Friends:

Friends walk together for life. The hard days are
behind us now.
A sentence, a lifetime, an eternal love, a cup of wine.
Friends are never truly alone,
And when you hear the word ‘friend’ you’ll
understand that
There’ll still be pain, still be struggle,
But we’ll keep on walking, and I’ll still be there.
FIRST YEAR UPDATES

With this being my first term at Cambridge studying Chinese I already feel that I have learnt and gained an awful lot (including Quizlet sets). However, I was not the only one with the sense that it was my first Michaelmas. With Cambridge being (almost) Covid-free, both the first years and older years got to enjoy the start of a proper new year together.

As a first-year student but having learnt a little Chinese before, I have been lucky enough to get to know a range of students. Together in C5, we have tackled Chinese literature and Qiu Shanshan’s protagonist’s woes regarding an afternoon tea (下午茶). As a spoiler, we discovered that a lot of thought goes into having a cup of tea. Wang Laoshi steered us through bodies of texts including various topics from Night markets (not to be confused with Nightclubs as I had soon learnt) to Taiwanese religious festivals. All were written in traditional Chinese. Something that at the beginning was a bit of a shock but has become increasingly appealing while China is still yet to open up. These lessons led to essays and speeches being made in Chinese each week. Wu Laoshi also gave us the challenge of listening comprehensions. ‘请再听一遍’ (‘can we listen to that again please’) has been a helpful phrase to know.

Besides the language, I have, alongside other first years, begun studies covering East Asia. From Chinese porcelain to Japanese literature a lot has been fitted into three sessions a week. Further study of China and Japan continued in frequent research seminars, ‘Eat sheep-shit’ being the first research seminar that I attended. Outside class, as students or comrades, we have gotten to know one another on a pub crawl, or rather the ‘Long March’, starting at Robinson’s college bar and exploring various colleges. There have been concerts hosted by the amazing John Beadle and Immie Parsley, introducing songs sung in Chinese from their year abroad in Taiwan. Plus, we had a Chinese poetry recital in the final week to finish the term. This has been a great start to my time at Cambridge and I am very much looking forward to next term.
Second Year, Second Gear! The *chengyu* have multiplied in number, and diaries overflow with essay deadlines and supervisions. Having started to go down diverging paths, classmates have been reading up on everything from classical Chinese history to modern Japanese literature. Some, much to Dr Chau’s chagrin, have even crossed over to the ‘dark side’ that is MMLL for their linguistics lectures.

Anticipation for the Year Abroad is building, although if someone were to have a peep at our traditional character writing, they could easily be persuaded otherwise. Highlights of the sojourn to Taiwan include escaping Moodle deadlines and advertising their classmates as potential partners in the classifieds.

Whilst the majority of students in the second year class are looking forward to a year full of Instagram story-fodder and dining like kings at night markets. Meanwhile, the old fogies in the class are slaving away in the hopes of receiving a sheet of paper in Senate House come June. Their valuable contributions to the experiences of the second years’ classes include ‘it’s the same in Japanese’ and ‘you think you have it tough?’. They will be missed.

Amongst all the hustle and bustle of *tingxies* and Tang Poetry, we students have had some great times together. Listening classes have given way to spirited dragon games, and supervisions have been highjacked to become classes about Chinese superheroes. When I find out at what HSK level students learn ‘Batman’, you will all be the first to be informed.

After eight undeniably intense weeks of term, we’re all looking forward to some well-deserved R&R. However, as difficult as the jump-up in to second year has so far proved, we’ve risen to the challenge and will no doubt be ready to tackle Lent Term head-on.
UPDATES FROM TAIWAN
After what was a very hectic summer of planning, remembering all the various documents we’d need to enter the country, and a short 7-day quarantine at different hotels across Taipei, our class finally arrived in Taiwan! Our self-isolation time was marked by some questionable-looking foods, the eerie Fur Elise garbage truck sound, and slowly becoming accustomed to the fact that everyone uses stickers on Line, including the quarantine hotel bot (nicknamed Butler). Those of us with nicer views got to see the main streets of the city for the first time while others were craving natural light, but overall, we had an easygoing and relaxed time in our first week on the island.

As soon as we finished our self-isolation, we explored the streets of what would be our new home for the year. Some of us were immediately thrown into the deep end in terms of the Chinese language as we looked for apartments to rent, negotiating with realtors and owners to not get swindled during our time here. The food here has also been a shock to all of us, especially the convenience and price of goods sold in night markets across the city. From the addictive 蔥抓餅, 割包, 麻醬面, 小籠包, 炸鷄排 and many more. In any case, you’ll definitely 滿載而歸 after a trip to any of these stands.

Of course, we cannot talk about our time in Taiwan without mentioning the Mandarin Training Center, where we have classes every day of the week, and have helped us improve significantly thanks to our wonderful teachers. The news reading course is especially relevant and interesting for us to learn about global and local events. Our first class was quite a shock, reading about the human trafficking crisis happening in Cambodia, followed by the dangerously low fertility rates in Taiwan. Our time at National Taiwan Normal University has also been unique in the fact that we have been able to interact with our Taiwanese ‘buddies’ (學伴) as well as students from around the world at the MTC. Some of us have been participating in the university
societies such as football, Kung Fu, table tennis, and arts and crafts.

We are incredibly fortunate to have the time to not explore Taipei, but the rest of the island as well. From day trips at 外奥, 三貂嶺, 九份, and 陽明山 to more planned-out weekend trips in Tainan, Sun Moon Lake, Gaoxiong, Hualien. Amazingly, southern cuisine is even better than its northern counterpart (special shout-out to eel noodle soup in Tainan, would highly recommend). The variety in scenery between tall mountains, black sand beaches, and tropical jungles is a change of pace from Cambridge.

What is most fulfilling about this year's experience so far for our group has been that we all feel like there is always something new to do and explore. Every day is a new opportunity to learn (whether that be Chinese or anything else) and discover places, people, and cultures. In the meantime, we hope that everyone at the faculty back in Cambridge is doing well and we cannot wait to share more of our adventures with you all soon.
FOURTH YEAR UPDATES

At the beginning of this term, calling ourselves ‘fourth years’ felt exceptionally strange — the last time we gathered face-to-face to begin a new, covid-free academic year was three years ago, when we were confused and enthusiastic first years. After huddling over our computer screens for many zoom lessons and spending ten months in Taiwan, it feels as if we left Cambridge as first years and have returned as fourth years.

Despite the disorienting nature of our newfound ‘finalist’ status, we have fully embraced the post-covid Cambridge lifestyle, rekindling friendships, rejoining societies and exploring new opportunities; badminton, tennis, football and rowing are among the many sports that have been enjoyed, the class choristers have sung their hearts out (particularly in the recent advent services and Joe’s ‘Lovely Choir’), and some have set up their own organisations, such as the Ripples: Cambridge China Review by James and Liam and my own Churchill Dance Society. Sam has even begun his own radio show (tune in to CamFM on Sundays at 9:00AM!). A particular highlight for me was watching Joe and Immie’s ‘From Taipei To Cambridge’ concert in the Pembroke Old Library; this musical telling of tales from Taiwan delighted my ears and filled my heart with fond, fresh memories.

Our academic work has been exciting; after using our Chinese to carry out everyday tasks and engage with new people and places in Taiwan, we have a new-found confidence to explore and expand our linguistic abilities in our language lessons and homework. Our option papers have given us opportunities to explore our interests, such as anthropology, literature and Classical Chinese, and the dissertation has proved a challenging yet intriguing experience so far. Some students have been inspired to pursue their academic interests further in articles and other extracurricular
activities, such as Ella’s column in *The Cambridge Language Collective* on ‘The Audioscapes of the Contemporary Chinese-Speaking World’.

We are often reminded of the challenges that fourth year students will inevitably face, such as final exams or planning our lives post-graduation. Yet the tumultuous nature of the COVID period and the ‘carpe diem’ attitude we cultivated during our year abroad have taught us to cherish every moment of this unique journey and remain excited for what the rest of the year holds.
Since the last update, Dr Heather Inwood has mostly been busy getting back into things after her sabbatical and has sadly had very little time for research. August saw the publication of the special issue of the British Journal of Chinese Studies she edited on ‘Games and Gaming in China and the Sinophone World’, which included Chinese Studies undergraduate student Joseph Beadle's fantastic article, 'Of Horror Games and Temples: Religious Gamification in Contemporary Taiwan' (which Joe wrote about in the last issue of this newsletter), alongside ten other articles and short essays from scholars around the world on various aspects of computer games and gaming cultures in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The issue also featured Heather's Editor's Introduction, 'Towards Sinophone Game Studies', which outlines the parameters of this emerging field and points to some of the most exciting possibilities in Sinophone game studies. Heather is currently working on her own first gaming-related research paper to be presented at the 2023 AAS conference in Boston, entitled “Space Games: Technologies of Hope and Ecologies of Scale in Taiwan’s OPUS Game Trilogy.”

While engrossed in research and writing, Dr Noga Ganany discovered – with great alarm – that the passage of time accelerates during sabbatical leave (or as Ming narrators would put it – 'time flies like an arrow'). Alongside working on her book manuscript, Dr Ganany is writing a chapter on religion and thought during the Ming Dynasty for the Cultural History of Chinese Literature, as part of the Bloomsbury Cultural Histories series. In August, Dr Ganany presented a paper on hagiographic literature at the UBC (hybrid) conference 'religion and local society' in honour of Professor Timothy Brook. In November, Dr Ganany gave a talk on pictorial hagiographies of the Daoist immortal Xu Xun at the Needham Research Institute seminar. Dr Ganany is looking forward to several international trips this spring to give talks at the AAS in Boston and at the University of Leipzig.


Professor Imre Galmbos gave a

Dr. Po-hsi Chen gave a presentation titled 'The "Quemoy-Matsu Award": How Was the Golden Horse Transformed from Party-State Apparatus to Globalised Entertainment' at the Taiwan Programme Launch Event at the University of Oxford on 28 November 2022. The preliminary result of this research is forthcoming in an entry form in the Encyclopaedia of Taiwan Studies (Brill).

Professor Adam Chau wrote a review article ‘Encounters with the Master: Western understandings of Confucius and Confucianism’ for the Times Literary Supplement (TLS) (16 Sept, 2022). A new book, Mots de Chine (Keywords of China), edited by Vanessa Frangville, Françoise Lauwaert and Florent Villard, came out in Nov, 2022 from Presses universitaires de Rennes (https://pur-editions.fr/product/8796/mots-dechine), which contains a chapter by Prof. Chau: ‘皈依 guiyi, prendre refuge: L’essor des identités confessionnelles’. Other keywords in the volume include: 现代, 民族, 中国, 留学, 他/她/它, 鬼, 自然, 丝绸之路, 文明. Even though the pandemic is still making research trips to China impossible, Prof. Chau gave a number of online lectures at the invitation of colleagues in China. ‘做宗教：宗教学究的动词转向’ (Doing religion: A turn to verbs in studies on religion) for Renmin University on 6 Nov (Renda Lecture Series on Religion); ‘点菜的人类学’ (An anthropology of composing meals from restaurant menus) at the Shaanxi Normal University (长安学术讲座) (22 Nov); ‘How I have been learning and using English’ for the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Xidian University (Xi’an) (29 Nov). He also served as commentator on 14 Sept on an online lecture entitled ‘Comparing Gods and Things: Looking at and Beyond Korea’ by Prof. Laurel Kendall (American Museum of Natural History) hosted by the anthropology dept. of Shandong University.
Following the last three academic years which were overshadowed by COVID, it has been a delight to finally arrange a term card filled with in-person events. We have held five events this term primarily focused on Chinese politics and international relations.

For our first event of the term, we welcomed the renowned Sinologist Professor Kerry Brown of King’s College, London, Director of the Lau Institute, and author of several books about President Xi Jinping, including the recent Xi: A Story in Power. His talk, titled ‘Understanding Xi Jinping, the World’s Most Powerful Leader’ provided many fascinating insights into the reality behind Xi Jinping’s image. Some of the topics covered were Xi’s ability to ground party activities within larger CCP and Chinese historical storylines, and why the comparison’s with Mao are ill-placed.

The following week, we were honoured to have Sir William Ehrman KCMG, former British Ambassador to the PRC (2006-2010), deliver a talk about his career. It was invaluable for many of the students present to hear his career journey from graduating Cambridge with a degree in Chinese to reaching the highest of diplomatic positions in China. His talk was interspersed with stories of interactions with China’s most senior leaders and accounts of major cities in bygone decades, none of which you can’t find in textbooks. These included experiences of handling the Dalai Lama’s extraordinary visa request and seeing Chinese ships under Deng entering Hong Kong for the first time. We hope the talk inspired some to follow in his footsteps.

Next up we welcomed Dr Heidi Wang-Kaeding, author of numerous books and articles on China’s environment including China’s Environmental International Relations (2021). It was an opportune time to host her for her talk on ‘China and the idea of an Ecological Civilisation’ as the COP 28 summit was just beginning.
Her talk provided a well-rounded overview of this concept which we were most grateful to become more familiar with. Case studies mentioned included a fascinating example on China’s video-monitored recycling practices and how they relate to the surveillance state. The Q&A section was one of the liveliest I have ever experienced at a talk and often related to China’s investment projects overseas.

The term’s penultimate event was a discussion between two experts on Chinese politics, Professor William Hurst and Dr Ling Li. Following the recent conclusion of the 20th Party Congress, the focus of the discussion was on Xi’s consolidation of power with respect to the newly elected Politburo Standing Committee. Dr Ling Li shared many interesting theories relating to the age limit of the Standing Committee and why it was interesting to keep the number of members to only seven. Professor Hurst then added more colour to the picture with reference to the wording of the President’s opening speech, leading to the conclusion that we can expect to see some big moves made by Xi utilising his power in the coming years. What those moves might be formed the basis of another gripping Q&A session.

Finally, we welcomed Sir Christopher Hum KCMG, former British Ambassador to the PRC (2002-2006), and our society’s Honorary Chairman. This talk was hosted in the beautiful Bateman Room in Gonville and Caius College, where Sir Christopher Hum used to be Master. He took us through some of the projects he worked on during his career, such as the handover of Hong Kong, before moving onto his current views on Britain’s relations with China. His explanation of why China could and should now be considered a ‘threat’, as has been frequently discussed in the news recently, gave a golden insight into how relations with a foreign state are assessed.

We hope those of you that have been able to join us for some of our events this term have enjoyed them. Turnout to all of our events has been better than we could have hoped for, frequently reaching the capacity of the event venues. We also hope to see many more members of the faculty getting involved with the society to continue to attract such an array of impressive and interesting speakers. Plans are already underway for next term’s events. Keep checking your inbox for the Lent term card and we look forward to seeing you then.
THE ANNUAL POETRY RECITAL

In the late afternoon on 29th November, the faculty was bustling with a crowd of eager Chinese language students ready to participate in the Poetry Recital Event. The event brought together students from the 1st year and the 2nd year to engage with classical and contemporary verse.

Each student was asked to learn a poem from a selection of Tang Poetry. The beautiful recitation of verses such as 孟郊’s 《游子吟》to 王之涣’s 《登鹳雀楼》filled the room. The 2nd-year students performed their recitation of Contemporary Poetry such as 徐志摩’s 《再别康桥》. All the students used beautiful expression and intonation to bring their poems to life. In the process of understanding and memorising the poems, it was clear they appreciated the richness of traditional Chinese culture. Apart from reciting the poems, the 1st-year students also prepared the song 《对不起，我的中文不好》by Taiwan’s music band 前进乐团. A raffle was also held at the end of the event where students received items representing Taiwan/Chinese culture.

Perhaps the highlight of the event was when our 4th-year students, 潘菲 (Immie Parsley) and 雨涵 (Harriet Howarth), delighted the audience with an unforgettable singing performance of Taiwanese 流行歌曲. And the fun didn’t end there, as 雨涵 surprised the audience with her impressive 嘻哈舞. It was not only a wonderful get-together at the end of the term, but an event to remember for a long time.
After the first China research seminar held on October 6, 2022, Professor Chau said to the room that if we wanted to ask further questions to Dr Fan Xin or even merely wanted to have a chat with others, we could go with Professor Chau and Dr Fan for a cup of coffee at Aromi. It was a warm and delightful afternoon, which I did not realise until I was thinking about my verses.

As a PhD student specialising in contemporary Chinese history of poetry and emotions, the seminar topic that day was not entirely my area – intellectual dynamics, media impacts and feminist sprout in the Republic period. Yet, a cup of coffee was always a good idea, plus the fact that I have always regarded myself as a history student since my undergraduate study in the History Department of King’s College London. Some friends of mine, who were also MPhil or PhD freshers, were willing to go as well.

It took some time to figure out how to place all of us properly in a rather tiny space like Aromi. We had to be divided into two tables, but we kept swapping our seats. After listening to many profound and deep anthropology theories – which I hardly understood – and discussing Chinese and English football, Professor Chau mentioned my research area, contemporary Chinese poetry. I briefly introduced Misty Poetry (朦朧诗) to others, saying that the ‘misty’ here meant the ambiguity of symbols and expressions in verses. Then, Professor asked me whether or not I wrote poems myself.

I said yes and emphasised - intentionally - that I regard myself as a poet.

Indeed, I established a literary salon, Moon Crew, on Chinese social media in 2019 and have kept publishing works of literature and visual art with fellow salon members. But I never publish my poems in official or formal poetry journals, partially because I always put my salon first, partially because I was not that confident to do so. What if I just said to Professor Chau that I seldom wrote poems and kept being humble and modest? I don’t know. But eventually, I said I write.

Then, Professor Chau challenged me to write an impromptu ‘misty’ poem on a napkin. I was surprised and glad and took a napkin without hesitation. After I started to think about the verses and looked through the window, I suddenly realised that it was a lovely sunny day with clouds swimming through the blue sky.

The first two sentences immediately came out of my head after Professor Chau mentioned his challenge, which certainly was – and is – my mood these days. Then, I followed the tempo of the first two sentences and wrote the second and third parts. I gave the napkin back to the table. Suddenly, I remembered the bard who wrote poems for travellers by the river in Before Sunrise. Looking at the
sunshine outside the café, listening to the discussions between professors and students, and writing some disorganised verses and passing them around. It was the most romantic scene I could imagine, and also the moment when my identity as a 'poet' became complete.

I would certainly remember the afternoon, although the scene and stage were normal and daily.

The initial napkin verses can be seen in the picture. I polished the poems that night into two poems, which can be seen after this introduction.

A picture of napkin verses can be seen here. The initial verses were written on a napkin and passed around the café. They were about feelings of romance and self-identity as a poet.

野兽

野（一）

沉睡在酒吧的狮子
做着吃人的梦

兽（二）

在酒吧的青蛙，清醒着
将燕尾服挂在
异族的尸体上

野兽（三）

青蛙，被挂满结块咖啡污渍的廉价陶瓷杯倒扣在昏昏欲睡的木桌上。在微笑的边缘做着
成为狮子的梦

无题

你要吃下寂寞
必须是满汉全席
摆好十八把长椅
向南，敬太阳一杯

你要吃下寂寞
当然是满汉全席
向南，向无数自己
举杯，假装以太阳的名义
Apart from the first poem, I also want to introduce another one I wrote during a formal dinner with my friends in Darwin College, ‘Palette’. I used metaphors and images of arts (palette), computer science (computer), archaeology and history (Hadrian’s Wall) because my friends specialised in these disciplines. I will not explain this poem further – after all, the right to explain poetry is not in the poet’s hands.

调色盘

被打碎的调色盘，手边
近在咫尺的山峦的缎带
浸入深沉的火光中
透过那台，来自
远古的计算机
点燃铁路，点燃天空
点燃距离，点燃心
——和心的墙
在哈德良引以为傲的南方
熊熊燃烧
将近在咫尺的山峦的缎带
进入手边被打碎的调色盘
Hi Mengyuan! How are you? Could you introduce your research for us?

Hi, John. Thanks for interviewing me! I am doing well. Thanks for asking about my research and I am glad to share it with you. My doctoral research study will demonstrate the local state's profile, function, and strategies in the revival of popular religions in contemporary China from the 1980s based on the case study of Huangdi (Yellow Emperor) worship ceremonies in Henan Province. This study aims to address the question of how to understand the religion-state relationship shaped by the changing socioeconomic politics of this socialist country dominated by its official atheistic ideology. In addition, it will demonstrate the Henan local state's delicate relations with the religious sphere, the central state, other competing local authorities, and involved social actors, and thus enrich the understanding of religion-state relations in today's China.

How have you found studying in Cambridge so far?

I do enjoy studying in Cambridge. Before starting my study here, I have visited Cambridge in 2018, and this experience motivated me to choose Cambridge. Cambridge has a reputation for innovation in academics due to its world's leading minds researching. Studying here in the past few months has offered me the opportunity to learn as much as I can while growing my passion and interest for my subject of choice. I enjoy lectures at FAMES during the terms, seminars in Needham Research Institute Seminar on Fridays, inspiring supervisions and frequent discussions. Apart from the fact that it is internationally famous as a centre of education, technology, history and culture, its Hogwarts-esque environment is perfect for me! Studying and living together with scholars and students from all over the world really surprises and inspires me. However, I have to admit that the
workload is undeniably high and studying here with all the talented people around me once made me suffer from impostor syndrome at the beginning of my studies here.

**What is your favourite place in Cambridge?**

I would say Darwin college as it feels like home to me. Darwin College is a lovely international community of postgraduate students from over 75 different countries. I like to exchange ideas with students and academics in a variety of fields during lunchtime in the dining hall. I enjoy my picnic on the beautiful island of Darwin and its wonderful riverside location in central Cambridge. I love its delicious food with reasonable prices and formals that never fail to impress me. I appreciate the support it has offered me and the effort it has made to improve the well-being of its members.

**What have you been doing in your spare time?**

I am a huge fan of punting. I love punting down the river, passing centuries-old bridges and stunning architecture, taking a picnic on board the punt with me, and having talks and debates with my dear friends on punts. Punting is very enjoyable and can help me to reduce and relieve my anxiety.
AN INTERVIEW WITH FU YANG

Could you tell us a little about your time at Cambridge? When were you here and what did you study?

I matriculated at Clare College and started to pursue a doctorate at FAMES in October 2012. With the generous support of the Cambridge International Scholarship and other sources of funding, I obtained my PhD in October 2016.

At FAMES I was enrolled in Chinese Studies and, with fond memories, supervised by Prof. Roel Sterckx. My dissertation, 'Economic Discourse in Early Chinese Thought: From Antiquity to the Mid-Warring States Era (4th Century BC)', is dedicated to analysing the intellectual history of early China and re-examining its narratives from “economic” perspectives. Interestingly, for quite some time Prof. Sterckx had put 'the idea of labour in early China' as my subject of research (at least on termly reports), which I only insufficiently touched upon in the dissertation. A few years later, though, I am now working on exactly this topic!

How was your experience here?

Studying at the University of Cambridge is one of the best things in my life. I paid visits to the UL, FAMES, Classics, History, as well as the Needham Research Institute on a regular basis. I also learned many fascinating things from my college mates, no less fruitful than the learning of 'serious knowledge'.

I miss a lot the intellectually vibrant atmosphere of Cambridge. As one of the top universities worldwide, Cambridge is a hub of talents, attracting brilliant UK and international minds. One can easily run into a specialist and attend a wonderful talk in any given field, or enjoy an inspiring event of interdisciplinary insights. Such an exhilarating environment, I believe, is what studies in the humanities and social sciences in Taiwan need most.
I shall not forget to mention that, to me, Cambridge was for study, but also a pleasant place to live (except for the high cost of living)!

Could you tell us about your research now?

At this point, I have three ongoing projects. The first project is to revise and publish my dissertation, and thereby contribute to research on the intellectual history of early China as well as the study of Chinese economic thought. The second one is also a book project, aiming to scrutinize the role of knowledge in the political culture of early imperial China. The last is a new project in collaboration with specialists in both National Taiwan University and Academia Sinica, dealing with the interplay between politics and religion in China and the Eurasian worlds from antiquity to the early modern era.

Returning to Taiwan after a stint in Cambridge, have the different academic cultures at each university helped you to understand the other better?

I dare not to reflect upon the academic culture of Cambridge, as I spent only four years there; but the experience in Cambridge certainly helps me to think about the situation in Taiwan.

One thing I really appreciate is how scholars get along with postgraduates. In Taiwan and perhaps East Asia in general, postgraduates are often treated as 'students', whilst scholars with academic affiliation are respected and given authority as 'teachers'. I think Taiwan should learn from the UK in valuing postgraduates, especially PhD students, as semi-independent researchers, rather than just students waiting to be educated.

Related to this, I think postgraduate 'training' in Cambridge is quite different from that in Taiwan. I mean not some structural differences, such as the fact that PhD students need not to take courses. I think postgraduate training in Taiwan aims first and foremost to build up one’s specialized knowledge, whereas in UK, at least in Cambridge, it pays more attention to helping one to become an independent and matured scholar. Simply put, postgraduate training in Cambridge, not only from individual departments but also other University-wide events, can better equip students with necessary attitudes and skills to survive in the academia. This is what I like to bring to my students in the near future.
A PERAMBULATION WITH DR. HAJNI ELIAS AND FORMER FAMES STUDENT WILLIAM BLYTHE

Nikolai Pevsner in his architectural guides takes the reader on ‘perambulations’, slow-paced and measured walks in which the writer and the reader observe and ponder together, noticing and discussing all of the architectural details along the way. The idea of this piece is to achieve a similar objective, but the focus is on Cambridge’s shared history with China rather than on architecture.

We meet at the back of King’s College to enjoy the famous view, but we don’t take the well-trodden pilgrimage along Simeon’s sloping path to Xu Zhimo’s 番言志 (1897–1931) stone. Instead, we pass into the path towards Clare College, and on the left stop by the bronze sculpture of Confucius. Depicted with an endearing smile, China’s famous philosopher watches over the path, checking which of the Clare students take the longest lunch breaks, and which of the students make the return journey to the University Library with the most gusto. It was a donation to the college by Wu Weishan 吳為山 (1962–), President of the Chinese Academy of Sculpture, and Fellow of the Royal British Society of Sculptors, in 2009. William remembers this moment well, since he was studying at Clare at the time.

After a period of time living in a series of different countries and learning a great array of languages, he has returned to Chinese studies, and is now reading for a DPhil on the notes of Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910–1998) at Oxford. I wonder whether the statue had any effect? Dr. Elias is well versed in Chinese Art, and she tells me that Wu Weishan is very decorated in China. I check later, and see that he has received awards ‘First Award for Person of the Year in Art’ in 2014, ‘Artist with High Moral Virtue and Artistic Achievements of China’ in 2015, and ‘Goodwill Ambassador for China Voices’ in 2016. High acclaim indeed! Clare’s Confucius statue had a bigger brother, an exact replica 31 feet tall that once stood in Tiananmen square. The statue had been understood as a veiled move towards the Communist Party’s rehabilitation of Confucius, and so when it was removed, many thought that its proximity to Mao’s Mausoleum may have been a step too far after all.

We follow our steps back out of Clare, and walk along to the side entrance of St John’s college, walking along the riverbank where delicate Wordsworth’s daffodils will be reminding us of Spring’s return in just a few months. We circumambulate the backs. We pass by a recently abandoned Kingfisher nest. Dr. Elias reminds us that Kingfisher feathers commonly embellished works of art, accessories and jewellery in China, and that there is a Qing Dynasty headdress kept in
Cambridge’s Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology worth seeing. We pass a fruiting pomegranate tree, and she reminds us of the fruit’s rich symbolism in Chinese art – its seeds standing for the wish for many descendants for posterity. We continue around the backs, over the bridge, through the scholar’s garden, round the bend, and to the stone erected and carved with Louis Cha’s (pen name Jin Yong 金庸 [1924–2018]) poem:

花香書香繾綣學院道，槳聲歌聲宛轉嘆息橋

He signed the poem, ‘A student, Jinyong’. William noted that this was typical of his behaviour at the time. He is a vastly acclaimed and prolific novelist, editor, and essayist. Here, as he often had to tell those throwing themselves at him for an autograph, he was a student.

The perambulation finishes beyond the backs of John’s, past the Gingko tree, a species native to China, losing its leaves across from St John’s Chop House, and in the Kettle’s Yard permanent exhibition. Jim Ede and his wife Helen were not collectors of Chinese art, but they did eat out of what Dr Elias calls ‘export porcelain’. Ede seemed to have a great penchant for the willow pattern. The café also proves a great place to stop and mull over a perambulation. You should try it!
The **Thomas Wade Society** was founded in 2009 as the University of Cambridge Chinese Studies Alumni Society. Until 2016 the society was dormant, when the Class of 2016 decided to rebuild the society into something new that could bring faculty members, alumni and friends of the faculty together.

If you would like to join the TWS network, please join the society's social media groups on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com). If you have any questions, would like to find out more or even help out, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the committee at thewadesociety@gmail.com

Founded by former second-year students, the **Cambridge University China Forum (CUCF)** hosts a range of exciting events relating to China. To find out more, please join their Facebook page [@camchina](https://www.facebook.com/camchina), or visit their website [www.camchina.org](http://www.camchina.org) to join their mailing list.

Looking to join our seminar series mailing lists? Please email iig21@cam.ac.uk (Prof. Imre Galambos) to be added to the Dunhuang and Silk Road Seminar series mailing list and ayc25@cam.ac.uk (Prof. Adam Chau) to be added to the China Research Seminar series mailing list.
The Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology have recently launched a new project, the MAA Digital Lab which is now live at https://maadigitallab.org/

Over the coming years the Digital Lab platform will be a space that gathers together stories, research and reflection from across the Museum and beyond, and produces and commissions new content from diverse voices that take objects in the collections as a starting point for asking new questions and brings new insights.

In our first few posts, we’re unravelling stories of the tea trade and tea consumption in Russia and China, the archaeology of maize alcohol in South America, and a Chinese deity’s 180 year and 9000 kilometre journey through wars, museums, and mistaken identities.

We are looking for people interested in contributing research based on collections of East Asian archaeological and anthropological objects at MAA. If you are interested, or know someone who might be interested, then please contact Aayushi Gupta at ag2151@cam.ac.uk to discuss your ideas.

Daniel Crouch Rare Books (4 Bury Street, St James's, London SW1Y 6AB) is a specialist dealer in antique atlases, maps, plans, sea charts and voyages dating from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Please scan the QR code to access our WeChat account where we post articles on our pieces in Chinese, or contact Miss Qi Sun at qi@crouchrarebooks.com
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For more information and updates, check out the Cambridge Chinese Studies twitter account: https://twitter.com/ChinaCambridge

Also, check out our library’s twitter account for events and information: https://twitter.com/ames_library